

**Important Note:** This activity was developed for the original Green Lunchroom Challenge program, a voluntary pledge program for K-12 schools to improve the sustainability of their food service operations. The project was coordinated by the [Illinois Sustainable Technology Center Technical Assistance Program](#) with funding from US EPA Region 5.



The following page(s) represent the content of this activity as it appeared on the original project web site, complete with available points and instructions for submitting documentation. **The project is no longer funded and as of June 2018 schools may no longer submit activity documentation to earn points and recognition as described.** The activity is presented for your information to guide your organization's sustainability efforts.

If your school or district implements the suggested activity and wishes to share its experiences, please email [Joy Scrogum](#). Your story may be incorporated into a blog post on this web site, the main ISTC site, or shared on social media to foster networking and inspiration among peer institutions.

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# Establish an on-site vermicompost bin

**Activity Category:** Composting

**Activity:** Establish an on-site vermicompost bin

**Rationale:** Not every school has space on its grounds to accommodate the creation of a traditional compost pile. Vermicomposting, the use of redworms to process food scraps through digestion into nutrient rich castings, lends itself well to producing a natural soil amendment in a small indoor bin, while also demonstrating ecological processes that can be integrated into curricula. The benefits of vermicomposting are the same as those of traditional composting--you reduce the amount of waste your institution is required to send to a landfill and gain a product that can help prevent soil erosion and improve the quality of local soils.





By Shanegenziuk (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

**Activity Description:** Establish an on-site vermicompost bin, either by making your own as outlined by some of the resources listed below, or via the purchase of a commercially available system. Use the finished compost for the maintenance of school property, in a school garden, or for indoor potted plants. If possible, involve students in the care and maintenance of the worm bin as part of classroom or club activities.

**Earn Challenge Points (150 points):** In order to earn points for this activity, write a brief description (2-4 pages in Word or PDF format) of the on-site worm bin, including when the bin was established (it must be after signing up for the Challenge to count); whether the bin was purchased or built (and if built, a description of the design); how much material is composted daily/weekly/monthly and the types of materials are provided to the worms; what the finished compost is/will be used for; if students/staff/parents are involved and how; and lessons learned from the process. Email your description, along with 1-3 photos of your compost bin, to Joy Scrogum at [jscrogum@illinois.edu](mailto:jscrogum@illinois.edu). If possible, include images that show students and staff helping build or maintain the bin. (Note: if you combine your description and photos into one document, the photos will not count toward the page limit.)

**Resources:**

 [The Adventures of Herman](#)  (University of IL Extension; information on red worm history, biology, building your own bin, worm diet, an bin maintenance)

 [Cornell Composting in Schools Worm Composting Basics](#) 




[WormWoman.com](#) (Vermicomposting resource site of Mary Appelhoff, author of *Worms Eat My Garbage*)

 [Vermicomposting 101](#)

 [New Mexico State University Extension Vermicomposting](#)

 [Worm Bin Project Unit](#) (Lessons geared toward middle school students)

 [Vermicomposting Forum](#) (Online forum on vermicomposting, for troubleshooting and sharing information)

 [Vermicompost](#)

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